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THE ETHICS OF KANT.

IN CRITICISM OF MR. HERBERT SPENCER'S PRESEN-
TATION OF KANTISM.

MR. Herbert Spencer has published in *The Popular Science Monthly* for August, an essay on the Ethics of Kant; a translation of this article had appeared in the July Number of the *Revue Philosophique*, and it cannot fail to have been widely noticed. It is to be regretted that unfamiliarity with the German language and perhaps also with Kant's terminology has led Mr. Spencer into errors to which attention is called in the following discussion.*

Mr. Spencer says:

"If, before Kant uttered that often-quoted saying in which, 'with the stars of Heaven he coupled the conscience of Man, as 'being the two things that excited his awe, he had known more of 'Man than he did, he would probably have expressed himself somewhat otherwise."

Kant, in his famous dictum that two things excited his admiration, the starry heaven above him and the conscience within him, contrasted two kinds of sublimity.† The grandeur of the Universe is that of size and extension, while the conscience of man commands respect for its moral dignity. The universe is wonderful in its expanse and in its order of mechanical

* Quotations from Mr. Spencer's essay will be distinguished by quotation-marks, while those from Kant will appear in hanging indentations.

† Kant distinguishes two kinds of sublimity: 1) the mathematical, and 2) the dynamical. His definitions are: 1) sublime is that in comparison with which everything else is small; and 2) sublime is that the mere ability to conceive which shows a power of emotion (Gemüth), the latter transcending any measurement by the senses. [1) Erhaben ist, mit welchem im Vergleich alles andere klein ist. 2) Erhaben ist, was auch nur denken zu können ein Vermögen des Gemüths beweist, das jeden Maassstab der Sinne übertrifft. Editio Hartenstein, Vol. V, pp. 257, 258.]

regularity; the conscience of man is grand, being intelligent volition that aspires to be in harmony with universal laws.

Mr. Spencer continues:

"Not, indeed, that the conscience of Man is not wonderful enough, whatever be its supposed genesis; but the wonderfulness of it is of a different kind according as we assume it to have been supernaturally given or infer that it has been naturally evolved. The knowledge of Man in that large sense which Anthropology expresses, had made, in Kant's day, but small advances. The books of travel were relatively few, and the facts which they contained concerning the human mind as existing in different races, had not been gathered together and generalized. In our days, the conscience of Man as inductively known has none of that universality of presence and unity of nature which Kant's saying tacitly assumes."

Mr. Spencer apparently supposes that Kant believed in a supernatural origin of the human conscience. This, however, is erroneous.

Mr. Spencer's error is excusable in consideration of the fact that some disciples of Kant have fallen into a similar error. Professor Adler, of New York, who attempts in the Societies for Ethical Culture to carry into effect the ethics of Pure Reason, maintains that the commandments of the *ought* and "the light that shines through them come from beyond, but its beams are broken as they pass through our terrestrial medium, and the full light in all its glory we can never see."

Ethics based on an unknowable power, is mysticism; and mysticism does not essentially differ from dualism and supernaturalism.

Kant's reasoning is far from mysticism and from supernaturalism. He was fully convinced that civilized man with his moral and intellectual abilities

had naturally evolved from the lower state of an animal existence. We read in his essay, "Presumable Origin of the History of Mankind" (*Muthmasslicher Anfang der Menschengeschichte*. Editio Hartenstein, Vol. IV, p. 321):

"From this conception of the primitive history of mankind it follows that the departure of man from the paradise represented to him by his reason as the earliest place of sojourn of his race, has been nothing else than the transition from the rude condition of a purely animal existence to the condition of a human being; a transition from the leading-strings of instinct to direction by reason, in a word, from the protectorate of nature to a status of freedom."

The view that the conscience of man is innate, in the sense of a non-natural, of a mysterious, or even of a supernatural origin, is untenable. Those disciples of Kant who entertain such views have certainly misinterpreted their great master, and the passages adduced by Mr. Spencer from so many sources are sufficient evidence of the fact that "there are widely different degrees" [we should rather say kinds] "of conscience in the different races." Mr. Spencer continues:

"Had Kant had these and kindred facts before him, his conception of the human mind, and consequently his ethical conception, would scarcely have been what they were. Believing, as he did, that one object of his awe—the stellar Universe—has been evolved,* he might by evidence like the foregoing have been led to suspect that the other object of his awe—the human conscience—has been evolved; and has consequently a real nature unlike its apparent nature." * * * "If, instead of assuming that conscience is simple because it seems simple to careless introspection he had entertained the hypothesis that it is perhaps complex—a consolidated product of multitudinous experiences received mainly by ancestors and added to by self—he might have arrived at a consistent system of Ethics." * * *

* The stellar Universe, of course, has not been evolved; Mr. Spencer means that according to Kant's mechanical explanation the planetary systems and milky ways of the stellar Universe are in a state of constant evolution.

"In brief, as already implied, had Kant, instead of his incongruous beliefs that the celestial bodies have had an evolutionary origin, but that the minds of living beings on them, or at least on one of them, have had a non-evolutionary origin, entertained the belief that both have arisen by Evolution, he would have been saved from the impossibilities of his Metaphysics, and the untenabilities of his Ethics."

Mr. Spencer believes that Kant had assumed conscience to be "simple, because it seems simple to careless introspection." But there is no evidence in Kant's works for this assumption. On the contrary, Kant reversed the old view of so-called "rational psychology" which considered conscience as innate and which was based on the error that consciousness is simple. Des Cartes's syllogism *cogito ergo sum* is based on this idea, which at the same time served as a philosophical evidence for the indestructibility and immortality of the *ego*. The simplicity of consciousness had been considered as an axiom, until Kant came and showed that it was a fallacy, a paralogism of pure reason. Dr. Noah Porter has written, from an apparently dualistic standpoint, a sketch entitled "The Ethics of Kant," in which he says:

"The skepticism and denials of Kant's speculative theory in respect to noumena, both material and psychical, had unfortunately cut him off from the possibility of recognizing the personal *ego* as anything more than a logical fiction."

Kant says in his "Critique of Pure Reason" : *

"In the internal intuition there is nothing permanent, for the *Ego* is but the consciousness of my thought. * * * From all this it is evident that rational psychology has its origin in a mere misunderstanding. The unity of consciousness, which lies at the basis of the categories, is considered to be an intuition of the subject as an object; and the category of substance is applied to the intuition. But this unity is nothing more than

* Translation by J. M. D. Meiklejohn, pp. 244, 249.

the unity in *thought*, by which no object is given; to which therefore the category of substance cannot be applied."*

Concerning the statement that Kant had believed in the non-evolutionary origin of living beings, we quote from his essay on *The Different Races of Men*, Chap. III, where Kant speaks of "the immediate causes of the origin of these different races." He says:

"The conditions (*Gründe*) which, inhering in the constitution of an organic body, determine a certain evolutionary process (*Auswicklung*†) are called, if this process is concerned with particular parts, *germs*; if, on the other hand, it touches only the size or the relation of the parts to one another, I call it *natural capabilities* (*natürliche Anlagen*)."[‡]

And in a foot-note Kant makes the following remark:

"Ordinarily we accept the terms natural science (*Naturbeschreibung*) and natural history in one and the same sense. But it is evident that the knowledge of natural phenomena, as they *now are*, always leaves to be desired the knowledge of *that* which they *have been* before now and through what succession of modifications they have passed in order to have arrived, in every respect, to their present state. *Natural History*, which at present we almost entirely lack, would teach us the changes that have affected the form of the earth, likewise, the changes in the creatures of the earth (plants and animals), that they have suffered by natural transformations and, arising therefrom, the departures from the prototype of the original species, that they have experienced. It would probably trace a great number of apparently different varieties back to species of one and the same kind and would

* Compare also Kant's "Prol. zu jeder künftigen Metaphysik," § 46.

† We call attention to Kant's peculiar expression, in this passage, of *Auswicklung* which has now yielded to the term *Entwicklung*.

‡ Die in der Natur eines organischen Körpers (Gewächses oder Thieres) liegenden Gründe einer bestimmten Auswicklung heissen, wenn diese Auswicklung besondere Theile betrifft, *Keime*; betrifft sie aber nur die Grösse oder das Verhältniss der Theile unter einander, so nenne ich sie *natürliche Anlagen*.

convert the present so intricate school-system of Natural Science into a natural system in conformity with reason." *

Kant has nowhere, so far as we know, made any objection to the idea of evolution. But he opposed the theory that all life should have originated from *one single* kind. In reviewing and epitomizing Joh. Gottfr. Herder's work, "*Ideen zur Geschichte der Menschheit*," Kant says:

* * * "Book II, treats of organized matter on the earth. * * * The beginnings of vegetation. * * * The changes suffered by man and beast through climatic influences. * * * In them all we find one prevailing form and a similar osseous structure. * * * These transitional links render it not at all impossible that in marine animals, in plants, and, indeed, possibly in so-called inanimate substances, one and the same fundamental principle of organization may prevail, although infinitely cruder and more complex in operation. In the sight of eternal being, which beholds all things in one connection, it is possible that the structure of the ice-particle, while receiving form, and of the snowflake, while being crystallized, bears an analogous relation to the formation of the embryo in a mother's womb. * * * The third book compares the structure of animals and plants with the organization of man. * * * It was not because man was ordained to be a rational creature that upright stature was given him for using his limbs according to reason; on the contrary he acquired his reason as a consequence of his upright stature. * * * From stone to crystals, from crystals to metals, from metals

* Wir nehmen die Benennungen *Naturbeschreibung* und *Naturgeschichte* gemeiniglich in einerlei Sinne. Allein es ist klar, dass die Kenntniss der Naturdinge, wie sie *jetzt sind*, immer noch die Erkenntniss von demjenigen wünschen lasse, was sie ehemals *gewesen* sind und durch welche Reihe von Veränderungen sie durchgegangen, um an jedem Ort in ihren gegenwärtigen Zustand zu gelangen. Die *Naturgeschichte*, woran es uns noch fast gänzlich fehlt, würde uns die Veränderung der Erdgestalt, imgleichen die der Erdgeschöpfe (Pflanzen und Thiere), die sie durch natürliche Wanderungen (sic! I take it as a misprint for *Wandelungen*) erlitten haben, und ihre daraus entsprungnen Abartungen von dem Urbilde der Stammgattung lehren. Sie würde vermuthlich eine grosse Menge scheinbar verschiedener Arten zu Racen ebenderselben Gattung zurückführen, und das jetzt so weitläufigte Schulsystem der Naturbeschreibung in ein physisches System für den Verstand verwandeln.

to plant-creation, from thence to the animal, and ultimately to man, we have seen the form of organization advancing, and with it the faculties and instincts of creatures becoming more diversified, until at last they all became united in the human form, in so far as the latter could comprise them. * * * As the body increases by food, so does the mind by ideas; indeed, we notice here the same laws of assimilation, of growth, and of generation. In a word, an inner spiritual man is being formed within us, which has a nature of its own and which employs the body as an instrument merely. * * * Our humanity is merely a preliminary training, the bud of a blossom to come. Step by step does nature cast off the ignoble and the base, while it builds and adds to the spiritual and continues to fashion the pure and refined with increasing niceness; thus are we in a position to hope from the artist-hand of nature that in that other existence our bud of humanity will also appear in its real and true form of divine manhood." * * *

[Herder's idea of evolution would stand on the whole if his conception of "the spiritual" did not imply a preternatural agent.]

"The present state of man is probably the link of junction between two worlds. * * * Yet man is not to investigate himself in this future state; he is to believe himself into it."

Kant makes no objection whatever to the evolutionary ideas of Herder. But Herder was not free from supernaturalism and from fantastic ideas in reference to the future development of man. He had not yet dropped the dualistic conception of the 'duplicity' of man and believed in the immortality of a distinct spiritual individual within his body. Kant's objection, therefore, is twofold; 1) against Herder's supernaturalism which leads him beyond this world; and, 2) against the descent of *all* species from *one and the same genus*. He says:

"In the gradation between the different species and individuals of a natural kingdom, nature shows us nothing else

than the fact that it abandons individuals to total destruction and preserves the species alone. * * * As concerns that *invisible* kingdom of active and independent forces, we fail to see why the author, after having believed he could confidently infer from organized beings, the existence of the rational principle in man did not rather attribute this principle directly to him merely as spiritual nature, instead of lifting it out of chaos through the structural form of organized matter. * * * As to the gradation of organized beings, our author is not to be too severely reproached, if the scheme has not met the requirements of his conception, which extends so far beyond the limits of this world; for its application even to the natural kingdoms here on earth leads to nothing. The slight differences exhibited when species are compared with reference to their common points of resemblance, are, where there is such great multiplicity, a necessary consequence of just this multiplicity. The assumption of common kinship between them, inasmuch as one kind would have to spring from another and all from one original and primitive species, or from one and the same creative source (*Mutterschoss*)—the assumption of such a common kinship would lead to ideas so strange that reason shrinks from them, and we cannot attribute this idea to the author without doing him injustice. Concerning his suggestions in comparative anatomy through all species down to plants, the workers in natural science must judge for themselves whether the hints given for new observations, will be useful and whether they are justified. * * * It is desirable that our ingenious author who in the continuation of his work will find more *terra firma*, may somewhat restrain his bright genius, and that philosophy (which consists rather in pruning than in fostering luxuriant growth) may lead him to the perfection of his labors not through hints but through definite conceptions, not by imagination but by observation, not by a metaphysical or emotional phantasy but by reason, broad in its plan but careful in its work."

Kant rejected certain conceptions of evolution, but he did not at all show himself averse to the idea in general. He touched upon the subject only incidentally and it is certain that he did not especially favor

or entertain the belief in a non-evolutionary origin of living beings.

Before proceeding to the main points of his criticism, Mr. Spencer calls attention to what he designates as Kant's *abnormal* reasoning. Mr. Spencer says:

"Something must be said concerning abnormal reasoning as compared with normal reasoning." * * *

"Instead of setting out with a proposition of which the negation is inconceivable, it sets out with a proposition of which the affirmation is inconceivable, and therefrom proceeds to draw conclusions." * * *

"The first sentence in Kant's first chapter runs thus: 'Nothing can possibly be conceived in the world, or even out of it, which can be called good without qualification, except a Good Will.'" * * *

"Most fallacies result from the habit of using words without fully rendering them into thoughts—passing them by with recognitions of their meanings as ordinarily used, without stopping to consider whether these meanings admit of being given to them in the cases named. Let us not rest satisfied with thinking vaguely of what is understood by 'a Good Will,' but let us interpret the words definitely. Will implies the consciousness of some end to be achieved. Exclude from it every idea of purpose, and the conception of Will disappears. An end of some kind being necessarily implied by the conception of Will, the quality of the Will is determined by the quality of the end contemplated. Will itself, considered apart from any distinguishing epithet, is not cognizable by Morality at all. It becomes cognizable by Morality only when it gains its character as good or bad by virtue of its contemplated end as good or bad." * * *

"Kant tells us that a good will is one that is good in and for itself without reference to ends."

It is unfortunate that Mr. Spencer misunderstood the first sentence of Kant's book (*Grundlegung zur Metaphysik der Sitten*). Kant does not speak of "a good will without qualification," nor does the expression "without qualification" refer to "a will without reference to ends." Kant speaks of good will in

opposition to other good things. Nothing, he says, can without qualification (*ohne Einschränkung*) be called good, except a good will.* Dr. Porter sums up the first page of Kant's essay in the following words:

"The first section of the treatise opens with the memorable and often-quoted utterance, that 'nothing can be possibly conceived in the world, or even out of it, which can be called good without qualification, except a good will.' If character is compared with gifts of nature, as intelligence, courage, and gifts of fortune, as riches, health, or contentment, all these are defective, 'if there is not a good will to correct their possible perversion and to rectify the whole principle of acting, and *adapt it to its end*.' † A man who is endowed with every other good can never give pleasure to an impartial, rational spectator unless he possesses a good will. 'Thus a good will appears to constitute the indispensable condition of being worthy of happiness.' * * * Moreover, a good will is good not for what it effects but for what it intends, even when it fails to accomplish its purposes, * * * as when the man wills the good of another and is impotent to promote it, or actually effects just the opposite of what he proposes or wills.'"

In the passages quoted by Dr. Porter, Kant speaks of "the *end* to which good will adapts other goods"; and in another passage of the same book, Kant directly declares that "it is the *end* that serves the will as the objective ground of its self-determination." Mr. Spencer must have overlooked these sentences. Kant says:

"The will is conceived as a power of determining itself to action in accordance with the conception of certain laws. And such a power can only be met with in rational beings. *Now it is the END that serves the will as the objective ground of its self-determination*, and this end, if fixed by reason alone, must hold equally good for all rational creatures."

* * *

Mr. Spencer interrupts his essay on the Ethics of

* The original of the first sentence reads: "Es ist überall nichts in der Welt, ja überhaupt auch ausser derselben zu denken möglich, was ohne Einschränkung für gut könnte gehalten werden, als allein ein guter Wille."

† *Italics are ours.*

Kant by a digression on Kant's conception of time and space. It would lead us too far at present if we would follow Mr. Spencer on this ground also. A comparison of Spencer's remarks on the subject with Kant's "Critique of Pure Reason" will show that Kant's view of space and time is radically different from that view which Mr. Spencer represents as the Kantian conception of time and space.

* * *

Kant rejects the idea that happiness is the end and purpose of life and at the same time he declares that ethics must be based not on the pursuit of happiness but on the categorical imperative or more popularly expressed on our sense of duty.

Mr. Spencer argues:

"One of the propositions contained in Kant's first chapter is "that 'we find that the more a cultivated reason applies itself with "deliberate purpose to the enjoyment of life and happiness, so "much the more does the man fail of true satisfaction.'" * * *

"That which Kant should have said is that the *exclusive* pursuit of what are distinguished as pleasures and amusements is disappointing." * * *

"It is not, as Kant says, guidance by 'a cultivated reason,' "which leads to disappointment, but guidance by an uncultivated "reason."

The passage quoted by Mr. Spencer from Kant, reads in its context as follows:

"In the physical constitution of an organized being we take it for granted* that no organ for any purpose will be found in it but

*The phrase "we take it for granted" (in the original "nehmen wir es als Grundsatz an)" reads in the translation quoted by Mr. Spencer: "we take it as a fundamental principle." Mr. Spencer objects to the passage declaring that there *are* many organs (such as rudimentary organs) in the construction of organized beings which serve *no* purpose. This however does not stand in contradiction to Kant's assumption that organs of organized beings serve a special purpose. The rudimentary organs have under other conditions served a purpose for which they then were fit and well adapted and are disappearing now because no longer used.

such as is also the fittest and best adapted for that purpose. If in a being possessing reason and will, the preservation, the prosperity, in a word, the happiness of that being, constituted the actual purpose of nature, nature had certainly adopted an extremely unwise expedient to this end, had it made the reason of that being the executive agent of its purposes in this matter. For all actions that it had to perform with this end in view, and the whole rule of its conduct, would have been far more exactly prescribed by *instinct*, and this end would have been far more safely attained by this means than can ever take place through the instrumentality of *reason*." * * *

"As a matter of fact we find that the more a cultivated reason occupies itself with the purpose of enjoying life and happiness, the farther does the person possessing it recede from the state of true contentment; and hence there arises in the case of many, and pre-eminently in the case of those most experienced in the exercise of reason, if they are only frank enough to confess it, a certain degree of misology or hate of reason; for after weighing every advantage that they derive, I will not say from the invention of all arts facilitating ordinary luxury, but even from the sciences, (which after all are in their eyes a luxury of the intellect,) they still discover that virtually they have burdened themselves more with toil and trouble than they have gained in point of happiness, and thus, in the end, they are more apt to envy than condemn the commoner type of men who are more immediately subject to the guidance of natural instinct alone, and who do not suffer their reason to influence in any great degree their acts and omissions."

Kant uses the expression "cultivated reason" not in opposition to "uncultivated reason," but "to instinct" as that inherited faculty which teaches a being to live in accordance with nature and its natural conditions, without the interference of thought and reflection.

That uncultivated reason would lead to disappointment, Kant never would have denied. He would have added: "It does more, it leads to a speedy ruin."

But if reason does not produce happiness, what then is the use of reason? Kant answers, reason produces in man the good will.

It is reason which enables man to form abstractions, to think in generalizations and to conceive the import of universal laws. When his will deliberately and consciously conforms to universal laws, it is good. Kant says:

"Thus will (viz. the good will) can not be the sole and whole Good, but it must still be the highest Good and the condition necessary to everything else, even to all desire of happiness." * * *

"To know what I have to do in order that my volition be good, requires on my part no far-reaching sagacity. Unexperienced in respect of the course of nature, unable to be prepared for all the occurrences transpiring therein, I simply ask myself: Can'st thou so will, that the maxim of thy conduct may become a universal law? Where it can not become a universal law, there the maxim of thy conduct is reprehensible, and that, too, not by reason of any disadvantage consequent thereupon to thee or even others, but because it is not fit to enter as a principle into a possible enactment of universal laws."

If a maxim of conduct is fit to enter as a principle into a possible enactment of universal laws, it will be found in harmony with the cosmical laws; if not, it must come in conflict with the order of things in the universe. It then cannot stand, and will, if persistently adhered to, lead (perhaps slowly but inevitably) to certain ruin.

Concerning the proposition that happiness may be regarded as the purpose of life Kant in his review of Herder's "*Ideen zur Philosophie der Geschichte der Menschheit*" Ed. H. IV, p. 190), speaks of the relativity of happiness and its insufficiency as a final aim of life:

* * * "First of all the happiness of an animal, then that of a child and of a youth, and lastly that of man! In all epochs of human history, as well as among all classes and conditions of the same epoch, that happiness has obtained which was in exact conformity with the individual's ideas and the degree of his habituation to the conditions amid which he was born and raised. Indeed, it is not even possible to form a comparison of the degree of happiness nor to give precedence to one class of men or to one generation over another. * * * If this shadow-picture of happiness. . . were the actual aim of Providence, every man would have the measure of his own happiness within him. * * * Does the author (Herder) think perhaps that, if the happy inhabitants of Otaheite had never been visited by more civilized peoples and were ordained to live in peaceful indolence for thousands of years to come—that we could give a satisfactory answer to the question why they should exist at all and whether it would not have been just as well that this island should be occupied by happy sheep and cattle as that it should be inhabited by men who are happy only through pure enjoyment?"

Concerning the mission or purpose of humanity and its ultimate realization, Kant interprets Herder's views as follows:

"It involves no contradiction to say that no individual member of all the offspring of the human race, but that only the species, fully attains its mission (*Bestimmung*). The mathematician may explain the matter in his way. The philosopher would say: the mission of the human race as a whole is *unceasing progress*, and the perfection (*Vollendung*) of this mission is a mere idea (although in every aspect a quite useful one) of the aim towards which, in conformity with the design of providence, we are to direct our endeavors."

We learn from the passages quoted from Kant that his idea of good will is neither mystical and supernatural, nor is it vague. It is a conception as logically and definitely defined as any mathematical definition. Good will in the sense in which Kant defines it, is only possible in a reasonable being by the power

of its reason. The good will is the intention of conforming to universal principles and thus of being in harmony with the All. This good will is the cornerstone of Kant's ethics; it appears as the categoric imperative of duty, so to act that the maxim of one's conduct may be fit to become a universal law. It is formulated in another passage: "Act so as if the maxim of thy conduct by thy volition were to become a natural law."

It is easily seen that, in Kant's conception, the *ought* of morals (viz. of the categoric imperative) does not stand in contradiction to the *must* of natural laws. Kant's conception is monistic, not dualistic. Kant says:

"The moral *ought* is man's *inner, necessary* volition as being a member of an intelligible world and is *conceived* by him as an ought only in so far as he considers himself also as a member of the sensory world."*

Our way of explaining it would be: Man *feels* in his activity the categoric imperative as an ought. So the snow crystal, if it were possessed of sensation, would *feel* its formation as an "ought." But both are, and to an outside observer will appear, as a "must."

* * *

In the Spencerian system of ethics, which is utilitarianism, the moral maxim or the idea of duty is not distinguished from the feeling of pleasure or pain that accompanies ethical thoughts and acts, and their consequences. This lack of distinction induces Mr. Spencer to consider man's pursuit of happiness as the basis of ethics. Accordingly the aim of ethics, he

* Das moralische Sollen ist also ein eigenes nothwendiges Wollen als Gliedes einer intelligiblen Welt, und wird nur sofern von ihm als Sollen gedacht, als er sich zugleich wie ein Glied der Sinnenwelt betrachtet. Ed. Hartenstein vol IV. p. 303.

maintains, is not the performance of duty, not the realization of the good; to the utilitarian this is only the means. The end of ethics is the greatest happiness of the greatest number.

It is strange that Mr. Spencer's essay contains a passage which, although intended as a point of objection to Kant, is a corroboration of Kant's ethics, and a refutation of Mr. Spencer's own views. While denying the statement that "a cultivated reason, if applied with deliberate purpose to the enjoyment of life and happiness, will fail to produce true satisfaction," Mr. Spencer says:

"I assert that it is untrue on the strength of personal experiences. In the course of my life there have occurred many intervals, averaging a month each, in which the pursuit of happiness was the sole object, and in which happiness was successfully pursued. How successfully may be judged from the fact that I would gladly live over again each of those periods without change, an assertion which I certainly cannot make of any portions of my life spent in the daily discharge of duties."

This statement, if it proves anything, proves that happiness is one thing and duty is another; it proves that Kant's theory of ethics, which is based on the discharge of duty and not on the pursuit of happiness, is correct, and that Mr. Spencer's theory which identifies duty with the pursuit of happiness, is wrong.

However, we must in this place express our opinion that Mr. Spencer's statement *cannot* be quite correct. The discharge of duty, unpleasant though the drudgery part of it may have been, was undoubtedly accompanied and followed by a certain satisfaction, which perhaps was less in quantity, but certainly higher in quality than the pleasure derived from the mere pursuit of happiness. And in the valuation of the intrinsic and of the moral worth of pleasures, the

quality alone should be taken into consideration, not the quantity. In this sense only can an ethical hedonism or utilitarianism be acceptable. The man whose pleasures and pains are of a higher kind, of a nobler form, and of a better quality, is morally and generally the more evolved man. And then, the basis of ethics would be, not so much pleasure or happiness as the quality of pleasure or happiness; it would be an aspiration to evolve toward a higher plane of life, to shape our lives in nobler forms, and to enjoy nobler, greater, and more spiritual pleasures, or, as Kant says, "unceasing progress."

Mr. Spencer's assertion, if taken in the sense in which it stands, is a contradiction of his ethical theory. But even if Mr. Spencer had declared that the discharge of duty affords a kind of happiness or satisfaction, as it truly does, there would still remain a deep gap between his and Kant's ethics. Mr. Spencer reduces ethics to mere worldly prudence; he says that we must do the good in order to be happy, and for the sake of its utility, and Kant says we must act so as to be in agreement with universal law. Mr. Spencer says:

"But now, supposing we accept Kant's statement in full, 'what is its implication? That happiness is the thing to be desired, and, in one way or another, the thing to be achieved.' * * *

"An illustration will best show how the matter stands. To a 'tyro in archery the instructor says: 'Sir, you must not point your arrow directly at the target; if you do, you will inevitably miss it; you must aim high above the target, and you may then possibly pierce the bull's-eye.' What now is implied by the 'warning and the advice? Clearly that the purpose is to hit the target. Otherwise there is no sense in the remark that it will be missed if directly aimed at; and no sense in the remark that 'to be hit, something higher must be aimed at.' Similarly with happiness. There is no sense in the remark that happiness will

"not be found if it is directly sought, unless happiness is a thing
 "to be somehow or other obtained." * * *

"So that in this professed repudiation of happiness as an end,
 "there lies the unavoidable implication that it *is* the end."

The pursuit of happiness is by no means repudiated by Kant as wrong or immoral; it is only maintained to be insufficient as a foundation of ethics. Kant's remark that happiness will not be found if it is directly sought has no reference to his own ethics. Kant, speaking from the standpoint of one who takes the view of utilitarianism, says that if a cultivated reason applies itself to the sole purpose of enjoying life and happiness, it will meet with a failure.*

Any other explanation of the moral *ought* than that from the Good Will, Kant declares to be *heteronomy*. Will would no longer be itself, and the principle of action would lie in something foreign to the will. Kant says:

"Will in such a case would not be a law to itself; but the object by its relation to the will would impose the law upon the will." * * * This would admit of hypothetical imperatives only: "I ought to do a certain thing, because I want something else." The moral and therefore categorical imperative, on the contrary, says: 'I ought to act so or so, even if I had nothing else in view.' For instance: the hypothetical imperative of heteronomy says: 'I ought not to lie, if I ever wish to preserve my honor.' The categorical imperative says: 'I ought not to lie even if it would not in the least bring me to shame.'"

Mr. Spencer quotes the following passage from Kant:

"I omit here all actions which are already recognized as inconsistent with duty, although they may be useful for this or that purpose, for with these the question whether they are done *from duty* can not arise at all, since they even conflict with it. I also set aside those actions which really conform to duty,

* The passage referred to is quoted in full on page 16.

but to which men have *no* direct *inclination*, performing them because they are impelled thereto by some other inclination. For in this case we can readily distinguish whether the action which agrees with duty is done *from duty*, or from a selfish view. It is much harder to make this distinction when the action accords with duty, and the subject has besides a *direct* inclination to it. For example, it is always a matter of duty that a dealer should not overcharge an inexperienced purchaser, and wherever there is much commerce the prudent tradesman does not overcharge, but keeps a fixed price for every one, so that a child buys of him as well as any other. Men are thus *honestly* served; but this is not enough to make us believe that the tradesman has so acted from duty and from principles of honesty: his own advantage required it; it is out of the question in this case to suppose that he might besides have a direct inclination in favor of the buyers, so that, as it were, from love he should give no advantage to one over another [!]. Accordingly the action was done neither from duty nor from direct inclination, but merely with a selfish view.

“On the other hand, it is a duty to maintain one's life, and, in addition, every one has also a direct inclination to do so. But on this account the often anxious care which most men take for it has no intrinsic worth, and their maxim has no moral import. They preserve their life *as duty requires*, no doubt, but not *because duty requires*. On the other hand, if adversity and hopeless sorrow have completely taken away the relish for life; if the unfortunate one, strong in mind, indignant at his fate rather than desponding or dejected, wishes for death, and yet preserves his life without loving it—not from inclination or fear, but from duty—then his maxim has a moral worth.

“To be beneficent when we can is a duty; and besides this, there are many minds so sympathetically constituted that without any other motive of vanity or self-interest, they find a pleasure in spreading joy around them, and can take delight in the satisfaction of others so far as it is their own work. But I maintain that in such a case an action of this kind, however proper, however amiable it may be, has nevertheless no true moral worth, but is on a level with other inclinations” (pp 17-19)

Kant's metaphysics of ethics is to practical ethics what pure mathematics is to applied mathematics, or what logic is to grammar. Kant's method of reasoning *in abstracto* everywhere shows the mathematical bent of his mind. In a foot-note (Editio Hartenstein, IV), p. 258, he says:

"As pure mathematics is distinguished from applied mathematics and pure logic from applied logic, so may the pure philosophy (the metaphysics) of ethics be distinguished from the applied philosophy of ethics, that is, as applied to human nature. By this distinction of terms it at once appears that ethical principles are not based upon the peculiarities of human nature but that they must be existent by themselves *a priori*,—whence, for human nature, just as well as for *any* rational nature, practical rules can be derived."

Schleiermacher says:

"A good is any agreement ("unity") of definite sides [certain aspects] of reason and nature. * * * The end of ethical praxis is the highest good, *i. e.*, the sum of all unions of nature and reason. * * * The moral law may be compared to the algebraic formula which (in analytical geometry) determines the course [path] of a curve; the highest good may be compared to the curve itself, and virtue, or moral power, to an instrument arranged for the purpose of constructing the curve according to the formula." (Quoted from a translation of Ueberweg.)

Kant declares in other passages that in examples taken from practical life, it will be difficult to separate clearly and unmistakably the sense of duty as the real moral motive from other motives, inclinations, habits, etc. But such a distinction must be made, if the moral value of motives is to be considered *in abstracto*. This is necessary for a clear conception of the essential features of morality. Mr. Spencer has on other occasions highly praised the power of generalization, which indeed is fundamentally the same faculty, as thinking *in abstracto*; here, however, he does not follow

Kant's argument, but declares "that the assumed distinction between sense of duty and inclination is untenable." He says:

"The very expression *sense* of duty implies that the mental state signified is a feeling; and if a feeling it must, like other feelings, be gratified by acts of one kind and offended by acts of an opposite kind. If we take the name conscience, which is equivalent to sense of duty, we see the same thing. The common expressions 'a tender conscience,' 'a seared conscience,' indicate the perception that conscience is a feeling—a feeling which has its satisfactions and dissatisfactions, and which *inclines* a man to acts which yield the one and avoid the other—produces an *inclination*," (p. 476).

It is quite true that every state of consciousness is a feeling, but we can and must discriminate between consciousness or feeling and the idea or thought which becomes conscious, in which the feeling appears, and which is, so to speak, the special form of a certain feeling. The consciousness and its special form, the feeling and the mental object of feeling, are in reality one and the same. Yet they are different and must *in abstracto* be well distinguished. Mr. Spencer's method is that of generalization, but generalizing can lead to no satisfactory results, if it is not constantly accompanied by discrimination. We must generalize and discriminate.

If a certain group of states of consciousness takes the form of a logical syllogism, it must not be expected that logic will find its explanation in feeling, although it cannot be denied that all the states of consciousness are feelings. Not the feeling in this case is to be explained, but logic. In our generalizations we must discriminate *in abstracto* between the feeling and the idea which feels. We must positively abstract from feeling and cannot consider whether the feeling of log-

ical arguments is pleasant or unpleasant. Mr. Spencer's method of explaining ethics, if applied to logic, would be as follows: "Man's logical sense is a very complex feeling and has developed from simple percepts such as can be observed in the lowest animals; percepts are a higher evolved form of reactions against irritations such as take place in protoplasm. The old method of explaining logic is that of deduction, modern logic will be inductive. Formerly pure logic was considered as a science *a priori*; but the evolution-philosophy shows that logic is developed by steps, it appears *a priori* to the individual now, but it is in reality a consolidated product of multitudinous experiences received mainly by ancestors and added to by self. Logical sense accordingly finds its explanation in most simple feelings. Our conceptions of logically incorrect feelings will be more and more avoided because they will ultimately be found to be unpleasant; logical correctness is striven for because of the feeling of satisfaction that accompanies the conception of a logically correct conclusion."

Sense is feeling, there can be no doubt. Logical sense and mathematical sense are feelings and if a person thinks a mathematical axiom or a logical syllogism or an ethical maxim, he has a feeling. Logical sense of reason is the product of evolution, and it cannot be denied either that one man has a more logical or mathematical or moral sense than another. But it does not follow that an explanation of mathematics, or logic, or ethics, must be derived from feeling pleasure and pain, or happiness. On the contrary we must abstract from feeling altogether and concern ourselves with the object of feeling only, which is the idea or the special form in which and as which feeling

appears. States of consciousness (never mind whether they are painful or pleasurable) must be considered as moral if their mental object, *i. e.*, the idea, the thought, the motive, the form in which feeling becomes manifest, is in harmony with the universal order of things.

* * *

Mr. Spencer declares that the world would be intolerable "if Kant's conception of moral worth were displayed universally in men's acts." And it must be acknowledged that Kant's ethics in their logical and irrefutable rigidity not only impressed the literary world of his time with the grandeur and sublimity of ethics; Kant's ethics also astounded, and overwhelmed his readers with awe. Virtue no longer appeared to be the fervid enthusiasm of sentiments; it congealed into the cold idea of duty which can be fixed in abstract rules and will operate like the correctly calculated gear of a machine. Objections have been raised by some of Kant's own disciples; but it must be known that the Kantian view of ethics does not suppress feelings, emotions and inclinations, it excludes them only from an estimation of the moral worth of actions. Kant gave the *coup de grace* to all sentimentality which had taken the lead in ethical questions too long. Mr. Spencer says:

"If those acts only have moral worth which are done from
 "a sense of duty * * * we must say that a man's moral
 "worth is greater in proportion as the strength of his sense of
 "duty is such that he does the right thing not only apart from
 "inclination but against inclination. According to Kant, then,
 "the most moral man is the man * * * who says of another
 "that which is true though he would like to injure him by a false-
 "hood; who lends money to his brother though he would prefer to
 "see him in distress."

Schiller, although an admirer of Kant, makes in

his Xenions a similar objection to this corollary of the ethics of pure reason. He says:

"Willingly serve I my friends; but 'tis pity, I do it with pleasure.
And I am really vexed, that there's no virtue in me!"

And he answers in a second distich:

"There is no other advice than that you try to despise friends,
And, with disgust, you will do what such a duty demands."

The difficulty is removed under the following consideration: A man with good inclinations is less exposed to temptation than a man with bad inclinations. If both act morally under conditions otherwise the same, the latter has shown greater strength of moral purpose than the former. The former's character (*viz.*, his inherited inclinations and habits which represent the sum total of the moral energies of his ancestors,) is more moral than that of the latter. But the latter deserves more credit than the former for overcoming the temptation; he has in this special act shown more moral strength of will than his more fortunate and morally higher advanced fellow-man. To those who have accepted the Kantian view, Mr. Spencer's and Schiller's objection can serve as a warning, not to lose sight of emotions altogether. Man is not only a reasonable being, he is at the same time a feeling creature. The instinctive faculties of man, the so-called subconscious states, are the basis of his consciousness. They form the roots of his soul from which spring the clear conceptions of his reason. The more man's habits and inclinations agree with morals, the more strength of purpose is left for further ethical advancement and moral progress.

Similar objections have also been made to Kant's mechanical explanation of the origin of the planetary systems and milky ways. It seemed as if the divin-

ity of nature were replaced by the rigid law of gravity. In his poem "The God's of Greece," Schiller complains:

"Fühllos selbst für ihres Künstlers Ehre,
Gleich dem toten Schlag der Pendeluhr,
Dient sie knechtisch dem Gesetz der Schwere,
Die entgötterte Natur."

"Dead even to her Master's praise,
Like lifeless pendulum's vibration,
Lo, godless Nature now obeys,
Slave-like, the law of gravitation." *

Such objections are always raised when a scientific explanation destroys the mystic view that a spirit or at least something unexplainable is the supposed cause of certain phenomena. Our sentiments are so closely connected and intimately interwoven with our errors that truth appears hostile to sentiment, and it becomes difficult to part with errors sanctified by emotion. Sentimentality always complains that clear thought is an enemy of romanticism, and romanticism is the only possible poetry to the taste of the sentimental.

Now it cannot be denied that a one-sided knowledge not only appears rigid, it truly *is* so, and will be destructive of such emotions as reverence, awe, aesthetic taste, religion and art. Criticism is a most essential feature of science and philosophy, and how negative, how desolate and melancholy appear the results of criticism! But the pruning process of criticism is very wholesome, and true science will only profit by discarding the vagueness of indistinct conceptions. Alpine lakes that are really deep can only gain by lucidity. Thus the clearness of genuine science and broad philosophy will only show the depth of truth into which by all its lucidity our emotions can

* Slightly altered from B. W. BALL's translation in *THE OPEN COURT*, p. 83.

plunge without ever finding it shallow or fathoming it in all its profundity.

Kant's doctrine of ethics is a truth that can stand the severest test.

Ethics, in the sense of the word as used by Kant, can be found in man only, in so far as he is a reasonable being. A truly reasonable being does not allow himself to be guided by impulses but is led by maxims. Inclinations and habits are remnants of instinct. Not he who in instinctive good-naturedness acts morally, is the ethical man, but he who deliberately and consciously considers himself a representative of the general order of things. The man, who adopts such maxims as can become universal principles, identifies his will with the laws of the universe. Man's moral dignity must not be sought in vague feelings or in instinctive inspirations; it is based upon his reason and is developed in so far only as he makes use of his reason.
